

Monpas of Black Mountain Forest of Bhutan: A Study of Socio-Cultural Sensibility and Transition

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Abstract

One small, isolated and less assimilated tribal stock inhabited at the Black Mountain forest of central Bhutan is identified as Monpas. These people are certainly different than the Mon race that is spread out in various parts of the Himalaya. The Monpas of Bhutan possess their distinct identity with pre-Buddhist ethnic beliefs and often described as the aboriginal indigenous inhabitants of the country. A sharper focus on the internal life of Monpas, however, reveals that they have an integral social relation with mountains and the forests. They are not yet properly explored and there exists an urgent quest to bring them to national mainstream in on going development context of Bhutan. This fascinating field based investigation being first research attempt in Monpas of Bhutan so far, has a direct relevance to the basic objective of promoting the understanding of society and environmental interaction of mountain communities of this very less known part of the Himalaya.

Key words: Tribal, indigenous, mountains, society, environment, interaction, relevance

The Monpas and Monyul

The history of Monpas is deeply wrapped in the mystery of the past because of the number of reasons. Before the advent of the Drukpa school of Buddhism founded in the 12th century A.D. in Bhutan, the Tibetans called Bhutan as the Lhomon or Monyul. In the Tibetan dictionaries, the word Mon is defined as the general name for different nations and tribes living between Tibet and Indian plains who from remote antiquity have lived by hunting. Many scholars however take Monyul to mean a dark country and Bhutan as a Lho-mon-Khabzi (the southern Mon country of four approaches). "The term Monpa once came to mean little more than southern or western mountain dwelling non-Indian, non Tibetan barbarian"(Aris Michael, 1979).The pre-Buddhists Gesar saga also mentions of the Mon as a people. In fact Mons is the pre- Buddhists settlers of Bhutan besides Khen, Brokpas, Doyas Birmis and Koch (Sinha, 2001:26).

There are various clans of the race Monpa who occupy different parts of the Himalaya from Leh and Padam in Ladakh to Monchati in Lahul and Spiti to Tawang and Tuting areas in the Siang district of Arunanchal Pradesh. The evidence of Mon kingdom is found flourishing in lower Myanmar in the 7th century A.D. and adjoining Thailand (Chakravarti, 2003:4). The Monpas of Arunanchal Pradesh and Mons of Ladakh and Irrawady valley of Myanmar were not so back ward as compared to the Monpas of present day Bhutan. The Mon tradition is so widely scattered that at one

time, most of the Himalayan region comprised a Mon land with cultural similarities and perhaps some sort of a unified political set up. The consensus of opinion among historians has been that the various non-Aryan groups are the indigenous population of the Indo-Gangetic valley, pushed away from the fertile plains by the immigrants (Chakravarti, 2003: 10). Monpas are not ethnologically Tibetan in origin. There is also a belief that Mons are a wave of religious and cultural missionaries who moved from the plains to the Himalayan hills (Francke, 1975: 7). One thing is clear that Mons held considerable influence in the Himalaya before the immigration of Tibetans and other races. They were strong adherents of nature worship and Bon religion, before the spread of Buddhism. The Tibetans who had newly adopted Buddhism used to hold the Mons and their old religion and traditions in lower esteem and sometime used the word Mon loosely to denote any people and any thing un-Buddhist in general way. Mon is after all a generic term vaguely denoting the Himalayan people in use among the Tibetans. They were different from not only Tibetans, Burmese proper, and the Hans but also the Indo-Aryans.

The Monpas of Bhutan are one of the oldest races living in the remotest and unspoiled hidden forests of central Bhutan. They are projected as unique, ancient and a rare human heritage. Bhutan has three main ethnic groups and three distinct dialects, the Mon, the Khen and the Dzongkha. It appears that when various ethnic groups came in contacts with each other their language and culture mixed together to form the main stream of Bhutanese culture. Although the Monpas have lost much of their identity, they still have possessed their distinct individuality due to their primordial attachments with the forest.

They are very ancient survivals bearing little connections with the larger groups (Harsrat, 1980). These people residing in Mangdue and Wangdue valleys in central Bhutan are considered also as the first inhabitants of their country by Bhutanese. These groups are certainly different than northern Monpas of the Tawang region in the sense that they seem still to linger in the middle Ages. While the Monpas of Arunachal and other parts of the Himalays, have been gradually being absorbed in the national mainstream. Not only the language but some of the social institutions peculiar to them and their dependence on forest for livelihood however served to link them to the forest dwellers of Kumaun and Nepal and Nagas, Kukis and Mismis etc. of north eastern Himalaya (Chand, 2007). The rehabilitation of these people by granting agriculture land and houses is on the priority of developmental initiatives. Bhutan has witnessed an impressive progress from the near medieval conditions that existed at the start of 1970's. However, there is no policy document towards the aboriginal. It is in this sense that the present investigation undertakes one of the rarest tribal communities of Bhutan so as to make them as partners in the prosperity of the nation.

Black Mountain Forest, the Home of Monpas

The tract of the country to which the name of Black Mountain applied is unique in every sense. It gives first an impression of remoteness both in space and time. This great central ridge of the Bhutan Himalaya is a territory of huge black boulders of primitive rocks, misty and verdant forest and presents a succession of the most lofty and rugged ranges running from North West to South East direction, separated by narrow beds of roaring torrents. The Black Mountain sector exposes an early Palaeozoic succession of Tethyan sequence. It is one of the four isolated succession of Tethyan sequence that occur in Bhutan Himalaya, other three being Lingsi, Gurpola and north of Lunana Lake (Ganser, 1964). The Black Mountain also allows deeper penetration of the monsoon currents to the north of the country, and therefore the wet zone in the east extends as far as snow line, while in the west it stops in the valley (Coelho, 1971). The west Bhutan is dry, cold and devoid of much vegetation while the eastern Bhutan is most humid and receives high precipitation. The moist mountain forest of Black Mountain is so dense and dark that the traveller appears to be shut out on every side from the rest of the world. This character of extreme ruggedness and remoteness is hardly interrupted by the presence of human settlements. The name Black Mountain must have been given to such a place of geographical isolation and unmolested natural beauty. This mountain separates Sankosh from Manas watershed of Brahmaputra River.

Extending southward from the highest peak of Bhutan Gangkar Punsum (7561m), this range divides Bhutan into two distinct regions both geographically and ethnologically. The people to the east of these ranges were under the jurisdiction of the Trongsa Penlop while, on the west they are almost pure Tibetan origin and under the jurisdiction of the Thimphu *Dzongpon* and Paro Penlop, before the emergence of a unified Bhutan under the present rule in 1907 (White, 1971). Again to the east to the range, the people have greater affinity with the population of the Assam state of India with a smaller, darker stature, and to the west they remain more of Tibeto-Mongoloid features. The western boundary of Black Mountain is set by Wangdue Chhu and the eastern boundary is marked by Mangdue Chhu.

Presently, the Black Mountain comes under Wangdue Dzongkhag of western Bhutan and Trongsa Dzongkhag of eastern Bhutan. The Palela (3290m), a pass across the Black Mountain links these two Dzongkhags. The areas around the pass is the home of Laps, the people of mountain passes who move northward in the direction of Lunana in summer and come down to Rukubji and Chandibji valleys, towards Trongsa during winter time. These semi-nomadic shepherds spend some time along with their yaks in the Black Mountain. The lower valley parts and some favourable hill slopes are also inhabited by other Bhutanese population. However, the desolate and high slopes of Black Mountain are the home of Monpas who live at a considerable distance from other population groups.

They occupy Jangbi, Wangling and Phumzur villages under Lhangthel Gewog in Trongsa Dzongkhag (Fig.1). In these three villages, they have 38 house holds with a total population of about 200. Nearest road head is Tongtongphai about 56 km from Trongsa. One can reach to Wangling and Jangbi, the nearest villages located on the left bank of Mangdue Chhu after a 3 hrs walk from Tongtongphai. Phumzur is a 5hrs walk from Tongtongphai .The area is densely covered by the mixed deciduous vegetation. The Monpa village on other side of the Black mountain is located in Adha Gewog of Wangdi Dzongkhag. It is about one and half day journey from Taksha Chhu which is 52 km from Wangdiphodrang along Chirang highway. Monpas occupy part of Rukha village which is locally known as Oalay and called themselves Oalaps. Though they are the descendants of Trongsa Monpas, yet they are not in direct touch with them. They are a small group of 12 households with 108 populations. In all, Monpas live in four Villages with a total 50 households and 308 persons (Chand, 2001). All, 12 households of Monpas living in Oalay village under Wangduephodrang district are surveyed, however, only 23 households out of a total of 38 households from Trongsa district could be surveyed. Rest 15 households were out from their village in search of wage labour during the survey, January 2001.

Demographic Characteristics

The present sample covers 35 households with a total of 283 Monpa populations residing in both Trongsa and Wangduephodrang Dzongkhags. There are 23 sample households surveyed in Trongsa from 3 villages of Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur. The most remote Monpa village under Trongsa Dzongkhag is Phumzur. Only 4 households were surveyed from this village. Similarly, in Oalay (Rukha), all 12 households with a total of 108 population consisting 55 females and 53 males are surveyed.

Table 1. Village wise Distribution of Monpa Population

S.No.	Villages	No. of Households	Population			Male per thousand Female
			Male	Female	Total	
1	Jangbi	6	23	22	45	1045.5
2.	Wangling	13	46	51	97	901.9
3.	Phumbzor	4	16	17	33	941.2
	Total (Trongsa)	23	85	90	175	944.4
1.	Oalay (Wangdue)	12	53	55	108	963.6
	Grand Total	35	138	145	283	951.7

Source: Field Survey Jan. 2001.

In all Monpa villages of Trongsa and Wangdue, a maximum of 65 people (23 %) are of the age group of 15 to 29 years followed by 54 persons (19%) in the age group of below 7 years. There are 47 (17 %) and 38 people (13 %) in the age group of 30 to 45 and 46 to 59 years respectively. A minimum of 24 persons are in the age group of 60 years and above. Both in terms of monastic and formal education, the literacy rate in the Monpa community is very low (21%). The average household size is 8.08 members per family, which ranges from 7.6 in the Monpas village of Trongsa Dzonkhag to 9 in Oalay village of Wangdue Dzonkhag.

Social System and Transformation

Monpas are homogenous in socio-cultural category. Their social magnitudes and persistence, as distinct entities over a long duration of Bhutanese history, are of immense significance. For hundred of years, Monpas have been pushed deeper into the hinter land of remote Black Mountain forest. Their life and livelihood in the past were always simple and sparse. In the early 90s, they have just stepped outside their world to encounter the modern development. They are now experiencing social transformation very steadily. This study captures change in the family system, family level, decision-making, religious orientation and attitudes, parent's role in marriage decisions, preferences about son and daughter as well as the family planning measures adopted by them.

Monpas are close-knit community. They live and work in groups. Joint family system is there fore quite prevalent among them (Table 2). Out of the total of (35) households 31 live in joint families. All 4 families in Phumzur village are joint families. The numbers of family in joint and nucleated system appear in table 2.

Table 2. Monpa Family System

S. N.	Villages	Joint family	Nucleated family	Total
1.	Jangbi	5	1	6
2.	Wangling	12	1	14
3.	Pumzur	4	0	4
Total (Trongsa)		21	2	23
1.	Oaly	10	2	12
Grand Total		31	4	35

Source: Field Survey, January 2001.

The maximum numbers of the family decisions are being taken by the male head among Monpa families followed by female heads and the least collectively. Monpa

is a male dominated community like any other Bhutanese society. They place their confidences and trust upon the male head. Thus, they follow the decision taken by him and seek advices in any matters that concern the family unit. However, it is more prominent in Trongsa villages where more than 70 percent families are male dominated compared to Oaly. Such decision might be taken in the families where son-in-laws are living together.

Table 3. Nature of Family Decisions among Monpas

S. No.	Villages	Father	Mother	Collectively	Total
1.	Jangbi	3	1	2	6
2.	Wangling	9	3	1	13
3.	Phumzur	4	0	0	4
Total (Trongsa)		16	4	3	23
1.	Oaly(Wangdue)	7	3	2	12
Grand Total		23	7	5	35

Source: Field Survey January 2001.

Religious Practices and Attitudes

The Monpas follow the Bonpo mode of worship and rituals, while in Bhutan the Buddhist way of worship is more apparent. The ancestors of Monpas known as Monkha-Thra, are said to have become the followers of Yeshey Goenpo (Mahakala) who in turn was a disciple of Buddha Kasyapa. Yeshey Goenpo was earlier a powerful heretic spirit who dwelled in the eastern Himalayas and invaded the minds and bodies of human beings often bringing them much harm including deaths and other disasters. He soon came under the influence of Sangay Yoesung. Buddha Kashyapa converted the Mahakala into doctrine-dharma and was to become the principal guardian deity of Bhutan since then. Bonism, however was the main religion before the advent of the doctrines of Buddha. Yet, their tentacles could not serve better; it seems to bless the Monpas as well. So they still remain one of the faithful of Bonism, though not dominant today. Monpas of Trongsa have stories related to Guru Padmasambhava who is said to have visited their place on the way to Bhumthang via, Nabgikorphu. Monpas of Jangbi and Phumzur claim that their king Marapai was the host of Guru Rinpoche. As the faith in Bonism was stronger than that of the Guru, they still remain to be the disciple of the Bonism. Today, one can still make observation that the altars are almost absent in most of the Monpa houses in both Trongsa and Wangduephodrang. They have a strong belief in their karmic deeds and fate. As expressed by one of the respondents from Jangbi-"it is our fate that we have to suffer for betraying Guru Rinpoche in the past".

Now Monpas have adopted and grown in the faith for Buddhism and few of them were found to have converted themselves either in to Geylongs or Gomchens. It is interesting to note that the rituals so called Oalapai Changbo is held twice in a year in every household during the harvesting season in Oalay village. Ritual is performed without any priest or monk. Before the rituals, the family gets ready with Bangchung, Chang, meat and then with rice. Then the alter is made out of the well spread banana leaves over which three bowls each filled with rice, beaten maize and wine are kept on the top of each other, indicating the welcome of rich harvest every year (Fig.2). Then the head of the family have a privilege of standing in front of alter and say some words of welcoming prosperous harvest. The folks from all houses of the villages come to make the ritual in the particular house to celebrate the ritual. The whole day and night are spent drinking eating and merry making.

Trongsa Monpas have a different way of celebrating the same ritual. Here either Phazo or Pau is involved in performing the ritual. It is also held twice in a year during the harvesting seasons. Thirty two cups made out of banana leaves filled completely with rice and another twenty three with flour are kept on the well decorated alter. This symbolizes the welcoming of the forth coming harvest. Similar entertainments and merry making are seen in the Monpa villages of Trongsa as well. Recently one Lakhang is constructed in village Jangbi by all three Monpa villages jointly. The death rituals have begun to be performed in this newly constructed Lakhang. Few years ago, the animal sacrifices were also made during the Bon rituals. But today, this practice is no longer in existence, instead, they offer boiled eggs to substitute the animal sacrifices.

The visit of holy Buddhist shrines and retreat is not common in Monpas as only four respondents have ever gone to pilgrimage and retreat. No one from Oalay has so far gone for the pilgrimage, may be due to the poverty.

Monpas belief that all the sufferings and miseries are all due to their fate or god's will. Out of the 35 sample households, will of god is important for 17 households while 13 households responded fare being the important factor. Jangbi Village in Trongsa have the equal number of households believing in both god and fate. A mixed reaction is found in Oalay where 5 households opted equally for fate and god and one self. Remaining 4 believe in god and 3 households in fate alone.

Dress and Language

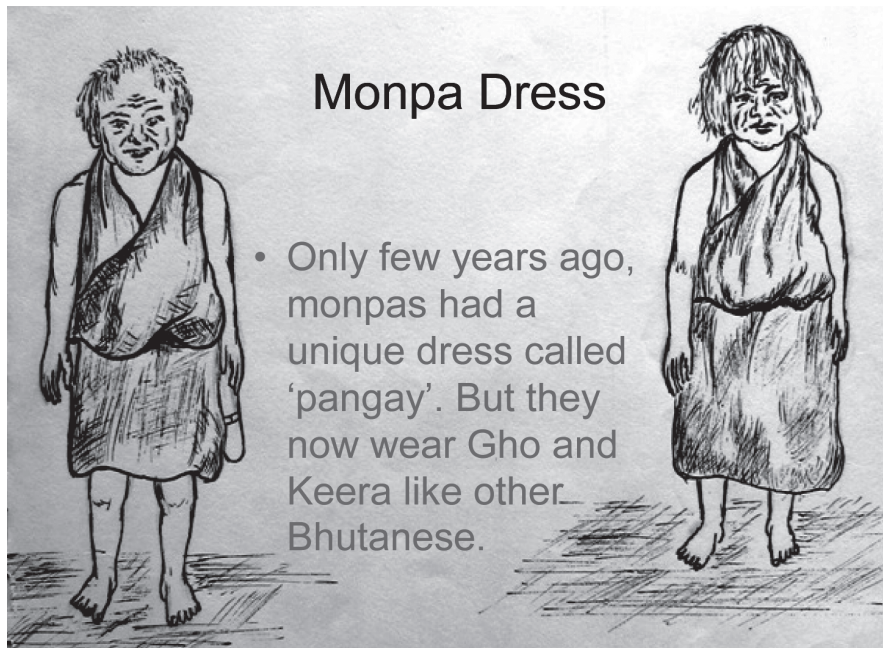
Only few decades ago, Monpas had a unique dress called Pangay. Though this dress is no longer is worn among present Monpas, they now wear Gho and Kira like that of other Bhutanese. Pangay was woven out of the allo plant (*girardinia heterophylla*) grown in the waste land. Fibres obtained from the inner bark of gigantic nettle called *allo*. In ancient times, Monpas used to make intensive use of allo plant for making

their dress, ropes, fishing nets, head bands etc. Allo plant is one to three meters tall which needs a lot of water for cleaning the fibres. It was worn that of Kira of women but it lags tag. Arms are left naked. It stretches down to knee for men and till toe for women. The back of the Pangay is folded by Kappa (Pin made out of bamboo). Over the waist it is tied by Kera (belt like gho). The dress used to be hard, rough and long lasting (Fig.3). Monpas no longer wear such dress. This clearly indicates the changing attitudes of Monpas.

Language known as Monkha is the mother tongue of Monpas for centuries. Their language is very much unique from the rest of Bhutanese languages. Today, due to the cultural influence imposed upon them, the language called Monkha is under threat to get extinct in future. In Oalay, this is no more spoken by the younger generation. It was observed during the field work that only few old people were able to communicate in Monkha. Only surviving Monkha speaking lady in village Oalay was Angay Choedum, who expressed her views saying that “it is sad that we borrow other languages to communicate within ourselves.” However, all Monpas living in Trongsa villages speak Monkha and Dzonkha to communicate with outsiders.

Family Traditions

Monpas are a self governing society with strong family bonds. Marriage in the Monpa society is not a hard and fixed or sacred institution, but more a matter of convenience. Monpa’s parents do not pay any role in marriage decisions of their children. Out of the total 35 sample households only in 11 households’ parents played their role in marriage decisions for their children.



Monpas prefer son and daughter equally. However, they have more attachment towards daughters. In the Monpa villages of Trongsa, the preference for daughters is more than the son. All four households in Phumzur gave their preferences towards daughters. The reason being that daughters remain with parents even after getting married, where as son goes to wife's house. At the same time, 7 households preferred both daughters and sons. In Jangbi, more households showed their preferences for daughters. However, in Oalay, the preferences for daughter and son are equal followed by 2 households who expressed equal concern for both the sexes. It can be assumed that there do not exist gender inequality among Monpas (Table 4).

Table 4. Preferences of Son and Daughter by the Parents in Monpa Society

S.N.	Villages	Son	Daughter	Both	No Opinion	Total
1.	Jangbi	1	3	1	1	6
2.	Wangling	4	1	7	1	13
3.	Phumzur	-	4	-	-	4
	Total(Trongsa)	5	8	8	2	23
4.	Oalay(Wangdue	4	4	2	2	12
	Total	9	12	10	4	35

Source: Field Survey 2001.

Health and Family Planning

Monpas are now showing their interest towards modern health facilities provided by The Royal Government of Bhutan. Table 5 shows that Monpas attending BHU (basic health unit) range only next to that of Pau (the spirit caller), who discovers the cause of the illness. Puja (worship) and helping each other during the sickness is the third priority. The dependence on the local medicine is least. The maximum of 10 households in Trongsa go for performing paws followed by 5 groin for pujas, 4 depending on relatives for help and only 3 households attending local basic health units. Only one person opted for local medicines. This shows that Modern health facilities are being kept as fourth option. In village Oalay, maximum (5) households opted for basic health unit and not even a single for Pau. Therefore, Monpas of Wangdue Dzonkhag are more aware of the modern health facilities than that of Trongsa Dzonkhag.

Table 5. Health Awareness among Monpas

Sl.No.	Villages	Pau	Puja	Local Medicine	BHU	Relatives	Total
1.	Jangbi	3	-	1	1	1	6
2.	Wangling	4	5	-	1	3	13
3.	Phumzur	3	-	-	1	-	4
	Total(Trongsa)	10	5	1	3	4	23
4.	Oalay(Wangdue)	-	2	2	5	3	12
	Total	10	7	3	8	7	35

Source: Field Survey January, 2001.

Monpas are very much superstitious and orthodox in nature. They believe that their sickness is not because of poor sanitation and hygiene. The evil eye, spirit, karma and insanity cause health problems. There are equal number of households who accept both spirit and insanity as a cause of sickness. Out of 35 households, 9 households believe in the karmic deeds of the past and 2 blame evil eyes as a major cause. Monpas of Trongsa, believe in majority (10 households) in the spirit followed by 7 households in the karmic deeds of the past, and 6 households consider insanity as a major cause of sickness. The Monpas of Oalay believe in majority (6 households) that the cause of sickness is due to insanity.

Of late Monpas have adopted family planning measures. Almost half of the Monpa couple in Trongsa have adopted family planning measures, whereas, Jangbi has the maximum households undergone family planning measures. As far as Oalaps are concerned, only 2 households have adopted family planning measures. Vasectomy and condoms are more common methods of family planning.

Desires, Hopes and Aspirations

Desires and aspirations for better living and changing attitude towards social and cultural ethos are directly related to the contemporary changes taking place in the society. Monpas are in beginning stage of the socio-economic transformation. They still inhabit the forests that are closely linked to every aspect of their life. Their daily routine with period of works and rest are linked strongly to seasonal cycles. They are considered one of the most economically and socially backward communities in Bhutan. The age old traditional cane and bamboo handicraft skills are though yet prevalent but the raw material is getting scarce day by day.

The trend of out migration from Monpa villages has set in due to increasing exposure with outside world. In all, 15 people have migrated from Monpa villages

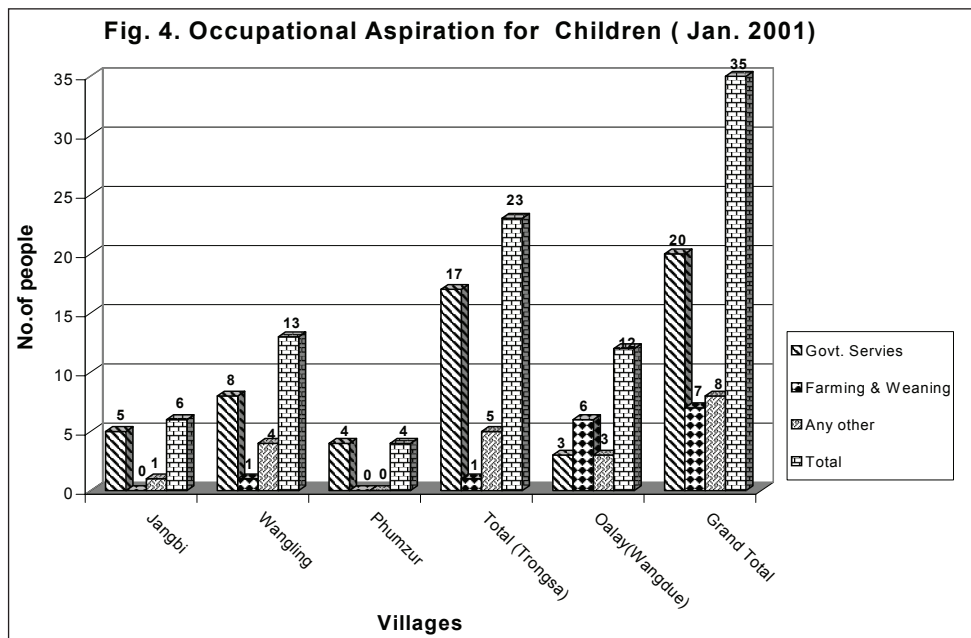
to other parts of Bhutan for employment opportunities. Two persons from Jangbi are employed in carpentry and labour in Thimphu. Like wise, from Wangling village, 3 monks, 2 labourers are working outside. One person is working as peon in Gangphey near Langthel geog. One head teacher from Oalay primary school is settled in Phuntsholing town. Education is very important factor determining the occupational as well as social organization of Monpas. Out of the total 35 sample households, 23 households preferred the formal education and another 12 opted for monastic education for their children. The village Wangling have the maximum number of respondents (8) opting for formal education. While in village Phumzur all are in favour of formal education. On the other hand, the majority of 7 households preferred their children to go to formal education in village Oalay and remaining 5 household favoured for monastic education. There is no primary school in village Oalay.

Table 6. Educational Preferences for Children among Monpas

S.No.	Villages	Monastic Education	Formal Education	Total
1.	Jangbi	2	4	6
2.	Wangling	5	8	13
3.	Phumzur	-	4	4
	Total (Trongsa)	7	16	23
1.	Oalay(Wangdue)	5	7	12

Source: Field Survey January, 2001.

The occupational aspiration of Monpas for their children is grouped under three categories such as government service, farming and weaving; and other jobs. Out of a total of 35 sample households, a maximum of 20 respondents opted for government jobs. There are 7 households willing to continue with their parental occupation like agriculture and weaving, and remaining 8 households are not clear about their preferences (Table 7). They may join any work given to them. There are 6 households in village Oalay in favour of their parental occupation, while 3 households each opting for government jobs and other occupations. People of Oalay still feel that government jobs are just alien to them (Fig. 4).



Main Problems

Transportation, electricity and irrigation are some of the major problems expressed by the Monpas. The majority (29) households expressed electricity as a major problem. The necessity of road and irrigation is expressed by the equal number of 26 respondents followed by school and other developmental works by 12 respondents each. The necessity of road is more felt by Trongsa monpas. Electricity is the second problem since most of them still depend upon the resin from pine tree. In Oalay, kerosene is not yet introduced, they entirely depend upon resin. Majority of (8) households from Oalay expressed transportation as the main problem. Irrigation is another problem faced by Jangbi, Wangling and Phumzur villages. While all the households of Oalay depend upon monsoon rain for their agriculture, irrigation is their prime requirement. All 12 Monpa households are deprived of education facilities in Oalay (Table 8).

Table 8. Main Problems Expressed by Monpa Households

S.N.	Villages	Electricity	Road	Irrigation	School	Others
1.	Jangbi	6	6	4	-	3
2.	Wangling	9	8	7	-	3
3.	Phumzur	2	4	3	-	3
	Total (Trongsa)	17	18	14	-	9
1.	Oalay(Wangdue)	12	8	12	12	3
	Grand Total	29	26	26	12	12

Source: Field Survey, Jan. 2001.

Conclusion

Monpas lived off the forest, gathering abundant food found in the forest. They have turned in to the village bound craftsmen, peasants and labourers very late. The flourishing of the Monpa's village societies and communities' oriented culture is the latest event in the tribal communities of the entire north-eastern Himalaya. They were here before the founders of modern Bhutan built Dzongs in the valleys of Paro, Bumthang and Thimphu, before coming of large or small groups who live today in the hilly terrain of the country, before seals began to stamp of the feudal states, goods traded and agricultural production made. Monpas kept themselves apart from 2000 year-old culture of Bhutan. Social and technological mediation within their mode of livelihood have not yet played a major role. This section of Bhutan society has the least education of all the Bhutanese people and they are among the poorest. They seem to have no development, no school no hospital. No prosperity not even a mumbling chants and pujas prior to the dawn of twenty first century. They have become victims of their own act of grabbing the wealth of the forest partly and also due to the state control of the forest. Now as a result they have become poor farmers and day labourers. They are skilled weavers but the scarcity of cane and bamboo resources forces them to migrate to nearby towns or villages. In fact in most areas, there is further erosion of the relative autonomy and dignity that they enjoyed in their communities. It has happened because their resource base is exploited, with hardly any benefit accruing to them. Now the Royal Government of Bhutan is aimed at assimilating, them in to the main stream. The Monpa Selvwai Yoeser Tshokpa project was implemented in April 2000, the first developmental intervention by the Royal Government of Bhutan. The promises of the project are yet to be seen. Tribal survival in the modern world would be possible and meaningful only when we allow them to grow with its own intrinsic worth. They want development and it has to converse with tribal sensibility about its meditation on the human presence.

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